

# ***The Great Controversy***

## ***Spiritualism Exposed***

Lesson #10 for June 8, 2024

Scriptures: Matthew 10:28; 24:23-27; Ecclesiastes 9:5; Isaiah 8:19-20; John 11:11-14,21-25; 1 Thessalonians 4:16-17; 2 Thessalonians 2:9-12; Revelation 16:13-14.

1. What is spiritualism? Is it wrong? Does it need to be exposed?

[From the Bible study guide=BSG:] Decades ago, stories surfaced about **near-death experiences (NDEs)**, in which people who died and were then revived gave incredible accounts of what they had seen and heard while “dead.” Millions now believe that these accounts are evidence that the dead are not really dead. **This foundational belief of spiritualism is one of Satan’s most widespread and effective deceptions.**

In fact, spiritualism began back in Eden with the serpent’s lie to Eve, “You will not surely die” (*Gen. 3:4, NKJV*). This idea also lay at the root of one of the greatest spurious religious movements of the nineteenth century with the Fox sisters’ claim, later admitted to be fraudulent, that they could receive answers to their questions from spirits of the dead.

The aim of this lesson is to show that our only safeguard against Satan’s last-day delusions is a personal relationship with Christ and a solid grounding in the teachings of the Bible. This includes its teaching about death, **regardless of what our eyes and ears and hearts might try to tell us.**—*Adult Sabbath School Bible Study Guide\** for Sabbath Afternoon, June 1.<sup>†§</sup>

[From the writings of Ellen G. White=EGW:] The theory of the immortality of the soul was one of those false doctrines that Rome, borrowing from paganism, incorporated into the religion of Christendom. Martin Luther classed it with the “monstrous fables that form part of the Roman dunghill of decretals.”—E. Petavel, *The Problem of Immortality*, page 255.—Ellen G. White, *The Great Controversy\** 549.2.<sup>‡§</sup>

2. All the way through the Bible from the books of Moses all the way to the book of Revelation, we are told not to involve ourselves with mediums, spirits, or any kind of contact with the “dead.”

**Deuteronomy 18:10-11:** <sup>10</sup> “Don’t sacrifice your children in the fires on your altars; and don’t let your people practice divination or look for omens or use spells <sup>11</sup>or charms, and don’t let them consult the spirits of the dead.”—American Bible Society. (1992). *The Holy Bible: The Good News Translation\** (2nd ed., Deuteronomy 18:10-11). New York: American Bible Society [abbreviated as *Good News Bible*].<sup>‡</sup>

**Leviticus 20:27:** “Any man or woman who consults the spirits of the dead shall be stoned to death; any person who does this is responsible for his own death.”—*Good News Bible.\**

3. **Satanism, witchcraft, spiritualism, and spiritism are all demonic. They are attempts to get us to worship a false god**, not the real God. What does the Old Testament tell us about the condition of a person after s/he dies?

**Ecclesiastes 9:5:** Yes, the living know they are going to die, but the dead know nothing. They have no further reward; they are completely forgotten.—*Good News Bible*.\*

**Job 7:7-9:** <sup>7</sup> [Job said:] Remember, O God, my life is only a breath; my happiness has already ended.

<sup>8</sup> You see me now, but never again.

If you look for me, I'll be gone.

<sup>9-10</sup> Like a cloud that fades and is gone, people die and never return;

they are forgotten by all who knew them.—*Good News Bible*.\*†

[BSG:] Though unbliblical, the belief that the dead go right to heaven at death has been around for so long and is so firmly entrenched that it's very difficult for people to let go of it. People use a few texts that are taken out of context to try to justify the belief. But this false teaching leaves them with no protection against the deceptions Satan can foist on them, especially in the final crisis.—*Adult Sabbath School Bible Study Guide*\* for Sunday, June 2.†

4. Are the dead aware of their surroundings? Or, able to communicate in any way?

**Psalm 6:5:** In the world of the dead you are not remembered; no one can praise you there.—*Good News Bible*.\*

**Psalm 115:17:** The LORD is not praised by the dead, by any who go down to the land of silence.—*Good News Bible*.\* [Footnote: *land of silence*: The world of the dead (see [Psalm] 6:5).]†

5. One of the clearest examples of what the Bible teaches in the Old Testament is found in Psalm 76:6.

[BSG:] When the Assyrian army was defeated and destroyed, the death of the soldiers is called their “final sleep” (*Ps. 76:6, CJB [Complete Jewish Bible]*).

**The idea of the dead as disembodied spirits hovering around to communicate with the living is not a biblical concept at all but pure paganism.**—*Adult Sabbath School Bible Study Guide*\* for Monday, June 3.†§

**Psalm 76:6:** When you threatened them, O God of Jacob, the horses and their riders fell dead.—*Good News Bible*.\*

6. Many people today have the idea that the Devil does not even exist. Thus, when they are approached by what appear to be supernatural events, they begin to believe that those are truly from God.

[EGW:] Many will be confronted by the spirits of devils personating beloved relatives or friends and declaring the most dangerous heresies. These visitants will appeal to our tenderest sympathies and will work miracles to sustain their pretensions. We must be prepared to withstand them with the Bible truth that the dead know not anything and that they who thus appear are the spirits of devils.—Ellen G. White, *The Great Controversy*\* 560.1.†

7. **Death is a sleep, a rest in sleep, until the resurrection.**

[BSG:] Though we mourn for the dead, think this way about those who die in Christ: they close their eyes in death, and then, regardless of how long it takes until Jesus returns, the next thing they know is the Second Coming. The first thought they might have at the resurrection is *Wow! Jesus really did come back soon after all!*—*Adult Sabbath School Bible Study Guide\** for Monday, June 3.<sup>‡§</sup>

8. The clearest example of Jesus’s reference to the condition of the dead was about Lazarus.

**John 11:11-14,21-25:** <sup>11</sup>Jesus said this and then added, “Our friend Lazarus has fallen asleep, but I will go and wake him up.”

<sup>12</sup> The disciples answered, “If he is asleep, Lord, he will get well.”

<sup>13</sup> Jesus meant that Lazarus had died, but they thought he meant natural sleep.

<sup>14</sup> So Jesus told them plainly, “Lazarus is dead,…”

<sup>21</sup> Martha said to Jesus, “If you had been here, Lord, my brother would not have died! <sup>22</sup>But I know that even now God will give you whatever you ask him for.”

<sup>23</sup> “Your brother will rise to life,” Jesus told her.

<sup>24</sup> “I know,” she replied, “that he will rise to life on the last day.”

<sup>25</sup> Jesus said to her, “I am the resurrection and the life. Those who believe in me will live, even though they die.”—*Good News Bible.\**

9. **Second Timothy 1:10; 1 Corinthians 15:51-54;** and **1 Thessalonians 4:15-17** make it very clear that people who die will sleep until the resurrection when they will hear the archangels voice and the sound of God’s trumpet.

[BSG:] **Both the Old and New Testaments use the symbolism of death as a sleep.** At least 53 times in the Bible, the word “sleep” is equated with death. The Bible writers concur that there is no conscious existence in an immortal soul that leaves the body immediately after death.—*Adult Sabbath School Bible Study Guide\** for Tuesday, June 4.<sup>†‡</sup>

10. In 1 Corinthians 15, Paul engaged in a fairly significant argument that if Christ was not dead and then raised to life and taken to heaven, then none of us could be either. However, if Christ was raised from the dead and went to heaven, there is hope also for us.

[BSG:] Why is the resurrection such a powerful hope for the Christian faith? What if we had the cross but no resurrection? What hope would we have? Why, then, is the resurrection such an important part of our faith?—*Adult Sabbath School Bible Study Guide\** for Tuesday, June 4.<sup>‡</sup>

11. Matthew, Paul, and John have given some very strong words about spiritualism in the last days.

**Matthew 24:5,11,24:** <sup>5</sup> “Many men, claiming to speak for me, will come and say, ‘I am the Messiah!’ and they will deceive many people....”

<sup>11</sup> “Then many false prophets will appear and deceive many people....”

<sup>24</sup> “For false Messiahs and false prophets will appear; they will perform great miracles and wonders in order to deceive even God’s chosen people, if possible.”—*Good News Bible.\**

**2 Thessalonians 2:7-9:** <sup>7</sup>The Mysterious Wickedness is already at work, but what is going to happen will not happen until the one who holds it back is taken out of

the way. <sup>8</sup>Then the Wicked One will be revealed, but when the Lord Jesus comes, he will kill him with the breath from his mouth and destroy him with his dazzling presence. <sup>9</sup>**The Wicked One will come with the power of Satan and perform all kinds of false miracles and wonders.**—*Good News Bible*.\*†

**Revelation 13:13-14:** <sup>13</sup>This second beast performed great miracles; it made fire come down out of heaven to earth in the sight of everyone. <sup>14</sup>And it deceived all the people living on earth by means of the miracles which it was allowed to perform in the presence of the first beast. The beast told them to build an image in honour [*sic-Br*] of the beast that had been wounded by the sword and yet lived.—*Good News Bible*.\*†

**Revelation 16:13-14:** <sup>13</sup>Then I saw three unclean spirits that looked like frogs. They were coming out of the mouth of the dragon, the mouth of the beast, and the mouth of the false prophet. <sup>14</sup>**They are the spirits of demons that perform miracles.** These three spirits go out to all the kings of the world, to bring them together for the battle on the great Day of Almighty God.—*Good News Bible*.\*†

12. We must be very clear. The Devil will perform real miracles to try to persuade us of his ideas.

[BSG:] “Their power of persuasion is to be found not in the content of their message but in the power of supernatural manifestations called ‘signs’ or ‘miracles.’ They perform/do (*poieō*) signs, thus appealing to the affective side of human beings rather than to their discretionary and rational abilities. The fact that these signs are performed by demons shows that the unifying force of the message of the three demons [dragon, beast, and false prophet] is spiritualistic in nature—God is not their source or origin. As the cosmic conflict approaches its closure, demonic power will enter the arena of human history in an unprecedented way. **Spiritualism, whose very foundation is the non-biblical teaching of the immortality of the soul, will nearly take the world captive.**”—“The Closing of the Cosmic Conflict: Role of the Three Angels’ Messages,” unpublished manuscript, p. 6.—[as quoted in *Adult Sabbath School Bible Study Guide*\* for Wednesday, June 5].†‡Ω§

13. **It is dangerous to trust our emotions. They can lead us to conclusions which are not true.**

[EGW:] Satan has long been preparing for his final effort to deceive the world.... Little by little he has prepared the way for his masterpiece of deception in the development of spiritualism. He has not yet reached the full accomplishment of his designs; but it will be reached in the last remnant of time.... Except those who are kept by the power of God, through faith in His word, the whole world will be swept into the ranks of this delusion. The people are fast being lulled to a fatal security, to be awakened only by the outpouring of the wrath of God.—Ellen G. White, *The Great Controversy*\* 561.2- 562.0.‡

14. Let us be very clear. Satan’s efforts will be redoubled in the final days of this world’s history. He will do everything he possibly can to keep people from observing the commandments of God or having the faith of Jesus. (See Revelation 14:12.)

15. These miracles will be summarized and made particularly challenging in the final events.

[EGW:] Fearful sights of a supernatural character will soon be revealed in the heavens, in token of the power of miracle-working demons. **The spirits of devils will go forth to the kings of the earth and to the whole world, to fasten them in deception, and urge them on to unite with Satan in his last struggle against the government of heaven.** By these agencies, rulers and subjects will be alike deceived. Persons will arise pretending to be Christ Himself, and claiming the title and worship which belong to the world's Redeemer. **They will perform wonderful miracles of healing and will profess to have revelations from heaven contradicting the testimony of the Scriptures.**

**As the crowning act in the great drama of deception, Satan himself will personate Christ.** The church has long professed to look to the Saviour's advent as the consummation of her hopes. Now the great deceiver will make it appear that Christ has come. In different parts of the earth, Satan will manifest himself among men as a majestic being of dazzling brightness, resembling the description of the Son of God given by John in the Revelation. Revelation 1:13-15.—Ellen G. White, *The Great Controversy*\* 624.1-2.†

16. Some people have been confused about how to know when it is the true Christ, who is coming. That question has been answered clearly by the Bible and Ellen White. Satan will never be allowed to duplicate the actual manner of Christ's coming. **When Jesus appears, the entire sky will be full of bright shining angels.**

[EGW:] And, furthermore, **Satan is not permitted to counterfeit the manner of Christ's advent.** The Saviour has warned His people against deception upon this point, and has clearly foretold the manner of His second coming. "There shall arise false Christs, and false prophets, and shall show great signs and wonders; insomuch that, if it were possible, they shall deceive the very elect.... Wherefore if they shall say unto you, Behold, He is in the desert; go not forth; behold, He is in the secret chambers; believe it not. **For as the lightning cometh out of the east, and shineth even unto the west; so shall also the coming of the Son of man be.**" **Matthew 24:24-27, 31; 25:31; Revelation 1:7; 1 Thessalonians 4:16, 17. This coming there is no possibility of counterfeiting. It will be universally known—witnessed by the whole world.**—Ellen G. White, *The Great Controversy*\* 625.2.†

17. Our Christian friends who do not have a clear understanding of the state of the dead have been really troubled by stories of people who apparently died and then came back to life in what is known as *near-death experiences*. We must not be deceived by these ideas.

[EGW:] Just before us is "the hour of temptation, which shall come upon all the world, to try them that dwell upon the earth." Revelation 3:10. **All whose faith is not firmly established upon the word of God will be deceived and overcome.** Satan "works with all deceivableness of unrighteousness" to gain control of the children of men, and his deceptions will continually increase. But he can gain his object only as men voluntarily yield to his temptations. Those who are earnestly seeking a knowledge of the truth and are striving to purify their souls through obedience, thus doing what they can to prepare for the conflict, will find, in the God of truth, a sure defense. **"Because thou hast kept**

**the word of My patience, I also will keep thee” (verse 10), is the Saviour’s promise. He would sooner send every angel out of heaven to protect His people than leave one soul that trusts in Him to be overcome by Satan.—Ellen G. White, *The Great Controversy*\* 560.1-2.†‡**

18. So, how do we who have biblically-based ideas about *sleep-death* share that truth with those who have the idea that people will go straight to heaven or to hell when they die?
19. Let us review the history of spiritualism or spiritism.

[BSG:] **Spiritualism is part of the devil’s scheme to promote the diabolical theory that we are gods and can live without God.** Thus, spiritualism is the devil’s device to keep humanity on his side of the great controversy. To maintain any form of spiritualism is to be stuck on the side of the devil. **To promote spiritualism, the devil changed the biblical definition of death and the Bible teaching about the nature of humanity.** These false doctrines lay the groundwork for the spurious teaching that we are eternal and indestructible and that we continue to exist even beyond death. As a consequence, this deception opens the door to the dangerous belief that after we die we can continue to communicate with other people and even angelic beings.

The movement of the European Enlightenment embarked on a long, hard battle to eradicate all medieval forms of spiritualism, including communication with the dead. However, the Enlightenment failed in this endeavor. **According to biblical prophecy, spiritualism will strike humanity with full force in the end times, preparing humanity for the last great deception in the great controversy.** That is why God’s people are called to proclaim to humanity the true nature, and intentions, of spiritualism, as well as the biblical teachings on human nature, the nature of death, and the true hope of humanity. Our hope is not based on the erroneous notion of an immortal soul but on the assurance of the resurrection of Jesus Christ and on an eternal relationship with Him.—*Adult Teachers Sabbath School Bible Study Guide*\* 132.†‡

20. Let us notice the main emphasis of this lesson in review.
  1. [BSG:] The true essence, and intentions, of spiritualism in the context of the great controversy is to deceive humanity into entering a direct relationship with demonic forces.
  2. The Bible teaches that humans are unitary, integrated beings; that the first death is a temporary sleep; and that the second death is total annihilation, which is also the biblical depiction of hell.
  3. The true hope that the Word of God gives us is the resurrection of the entire human being and an eternal relationship with God.—*Adult Teachers Sabbath School Bible Study Guide*\* 132.†‡

21. Notice these additional comments about the history of modern spiritualism.

[BSG:] **Modern spiritualism refers to the religious and/or philosophical belief that death is not the end of human existence. Rather, spiritualism contends that the spirit survives as an ethereal, immaterial, eternal, immortal soul.** After death, these souls or spirits continue to develop and evolve, rapidly advancing to other dimensions and levels of existence and

knowledge. Humans who are still in their bodies can contact these departed spirits, asking for help and guidance. These contacts could be done through specialists, such as mediums. Or one could personally contact these spirits through study and practice.

Generally, **modern spiritualism** is believed to have originated in Hydesville, New York, on March 31, 1848, with **the Fox sisters**, who **claimed that a spirit communicated with them through a rapping code**. In 1888, one of the sisters disclosed that all the rapping had been a hoax, but in 1889, she retracted her confession. Despite huge scandals of fraud, spiritualism spread in North America. By the end of the nineteenth century, several million middle- and upper-class Americans considered themselves spiritualists.

In the meantime, in the 1850s, **Hippolyte Léon Denizard Rivail**, a French teacher known by the **pseudonym Allan Kardec**, **developed spiritism**. Spiritism teaches that humans are incarnations and reincarnations of immortal spirits that populate a transcendent sphere. Thus, while **spiritism believes in the reincarnation of the eternal soul**, **spiritualism believes in the eternity of the soul without accepting the concept of reincarnation**. While all spiritists are spiritualists, not all spiritualists are spiritists. Although there is some disagreement between these spiritualistic movements, **they are all united by one belief: the immortality of the soul and the possibility of communicating with spirits after their death**. In the second half of the nineteenth century, an increasing number of the educated elites of Europe embraced either spiritualism or spiritism, developing **modern Western occultism**. They organized themselves in numerous societies and associations, publishing an enormous quantity of books and articles on esoteric knowledge and magic.—*Adult Teachers Sabbath School Bible Study Guide\** 132-133.†§

22. We may not be aware of how much influence the idea of the immortality of the soul has had on other religions. This belief permeates shamanism, Shintoism, Hinduism, Buddhism, voodoo, and other local and regional pagan religions. In ancient times it invaded Pythagoreanism, Platonism, Aristotelianism, Middle Platonism, and Neoplatonism. Manichaeism and Gnosticism were also built on the same concepts. Unfortunately, these ideas crept subtly into early Christian thinking. As a result, the Roman Catholic Church and the Orthodox churches have developed a complete cult of saints and saint worship and praying to saints, etc. The Protestant Reformation and the reformers rejected this whole cult of the saints.
23. It is very interesting to note that modern spiritualism arose exactly the same time and in the same part of the world that Adventism arose, during the 1840s in northeastern United States. Was this Satan's attempt to introduce a counterfeit religion in place of the true? The **European Enlightenment, or what is sometimes called modernism**, set out with the idea to **uproot completely any supernatural ideas from society**. Unfortunately, they **accomplished rooting out the idea of any belief in God turning our society into a secular and atheistic one**. But it did not remove spiritualism. Various forms of spiritualism are invading books, cartoons, and movies in our day.

[BSG:] What is the role of spiritualism in the devil's strategy versus the great controversy? By promoting spiritualism, the devil wants to explain, and confirm, his foundational deception that started the great controversy, namely:

- that God is not the only God, but that we are all gods;
- that we have life in and of ourselves;
- that we have a component (the soul) of our beings that is spiritual (immaterial, ethereal), indestructible, immortal, and eternal; and
- that we are morally autonomous.—*Adult Teachers Sabbath School Bible Study Guide*\* 135.‡

24. The Devil understands that if he can deceive us, even in one area of human existence or ideas, he can easily lead us into all kinds of other false doctrines. Notice some additional comments from the New Testament about the Devil's capabilities.

**1 Corinthians 10:20:** No! What I am saying is that what is sacrificed on pagan altars is offered to demons, not to God. And I do not want you to be partners with demons.—*Good News Bible*.\*

**John 8:44:** [Jesus said:] “You are the children of your father, the Devil, and you want to follow your father's desires. From the very beginning he was a murderer and has never been on the side of truth, because there is no truth in him. When he tells a lie, he is only doing what is natural to him, because he is a liar and the father of all lies.”—*Good News Bible*.\*‡

**Mark 5:2:** As soon as Jesus got out of the boat, he was met by a man who came out of the burial caves there. This man had an evil spirit in him.—*Good News Bible*.\*

**1 Peter 5:8:** Be alert, be on the watch! Your enemy, the Devil, roams round like a roaring lion, looking for someone to devour.—*Good News Bible*.\*

25. In opposition to the Devil's ideas, we have stories of Jesus casting out demons under various situations in the Gospels. In one case we read:

**Luke 8:26-33:** <sup>26</sup> Jesus and his disciples sailed on over to the territory of Gerasa, which is across the lake from Galilee. <sup>27</sup>As Jesus stepped ashore, he was met by a man from the town who had demons in him. For a long time this man had gone without clothes and would not stay at home, but spent his time in the burial caves. <sup>28</sup>When he saw Jesus, he gave a loud cry, threw himself down at his feet, and shouted, “Jesus, Son of the Most High God! What do you want with me? I beg you, don't punish me!” <sup>29</sup>He said this because Jesus had ordered the evil spirit to go out of him. Many times it had seized him, and even though he was kept a prisoner, his hands and feet fastened with chains, he would break the chains and be driven by the demon out into the desert.

<sup>30</sup> Jesus asked him, “What is your name?”

“My name is ‘Mob’,” he answered — because many demons had gone into him.

<sup>31</sup>The demons begged Jesus not to send them into the abyss.

<sup>32</sup> There was a large herd of pigs near by, feeding on a hillside. So the demons begged Jesus to let them go into the pigs, and he let them. <sup>33</sup>They went out of the man and into the pigs. The whole herd rushed down the side of the cliff into the lake and was drowned.—*Good News Bible*.\*



[EGW:] But the purposes of Christ were not thwarted. He allowed the evil spirits to destroy the herd of swine as a rebuke to those Jews who were raising these unclean beasts for the sake of gain. Had not Christ restrained the demons, they would have plunged into the sea, not only the swine, but also their keepers and owners. The preservation of both the keepers and the owners was due alone to His power, mercifully exercised for their deliverance.—Ellen G. White, *The Great Controversy*\* 515.1.‡

26. Seventh-day Adventists want to make it very clear that we are opposed to these kinds of spiritualistic ideas. Thus, we have included the following in our system of beliefs:

[Belief 11: Growing in Christ:] By His death on the cross Jesus triumphed over the forces of evil. He who subjugated the demonic spirits during His earthly ministry has broken their power and made certain their ultimate doom. Jesus' victory gives us victory over the evil forces that still seek to control us, as we walk with Him in peace, joy, and assurance of His love. Now the Holy Spirit dwells within us and empowers us. Continually committed to Jesus as our Saviour and Lord, we are set free from the burden of our past deeds. No longer do we live in the darkness, fear of evil powers, ignorance, and meaninglessness of our former way of life. In this new freedom in Jesus, we are called to grow into the likeness of His character, communing with Him daily in prayer, feeding on His Word, meditating on it and on His providence, singing His praises, gathering together for worship, and participating in the mission of the Church. We are also called to follow Christ's example by compassionately ministering to the physical, mental, social, emotional, and spiritual needs of humanity. As we give ourselves in loving service to those around us and in witnessing to His salvation, His constant presence with us through the Spirit transforms every moment and every task into a spiritual experience. (1 Chron. 29:11; Ps. 1:1, 2; 23:4; 77:11, 12; Matt. 20:25-28; 25:31-46; Luke 10:17-20; John 20:21; Rom. 8:38, 39; 2 Cor. 3:17, 18; Gal. 5:22-25; Eph. 5:19, 20; 6:12-18; Phil. 3:7-14; Col. 1:13, 14; 2:6, 14, 15; 1 Thess. 5:16-18, 23; Heb. 10:25; James 1:27; 2 Peter 2:9; 3:18; 1 John 4:4.)—*Belief 11: "Growing in Christ,"* <https://www.adventist.org/growing-in-christ> [Retrieved on 25 March 2024].‡§ [The same material is quoted as "Fundamental Belief Number 11" in *Adult Teachers Sabbath School Bible Study Guide*\* 135-136; however, the Bible study guide does not list the Bible references at the end.]‡

27. Adventism is one of the few religions that is pretty much worldwide. In some areas, especially in Asia and Africa, Christians are faced on a regular basis with spiritualism and occultism in some very forceful manifestations. But we need to be aware that even in the Western world, Satanic ideas are creeping into all kinds of media. Will we be prepared for Satan's final deceptions? Consider what is being widely promoted through media, movies and the internet. Could we be subtly deceived?

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Last Modified: March 26, 2024

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